



Justice Center for the Protection of People With Special Needs

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Erie County Caregiver Pleads Guilty to Charges of Sexual Abuse

Case Investigated and Prosecuted by the Justice Center

Williamsville, NY – NYS Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs Special Prosecutor Patricia E. Gunning has announced an Erie County man pled guilty to charges that he sexually abused an adult female with developmental disabilities in his care.

George R. West of Williamsville (DOB 04/10/58) pled guilty to two counts of Sexual Abuse in the Second Degree, a class “A” misdemeanor. He has also been terminated from his position as a direct care staff employee of People Inc. of Amherst, New York. West pled guilty before the Hon. Christopher J. Burns of Erie County Supreme Court.

“This defendant purposefully pursued this victim for his own sexual gratification, knowing that due to her disability, she was legally incapable of consenting to sexual contact with a staff member. The defendant violated the trust placed in him by his the victim, her family, and his employer,” said Special Prosecutor Gunning. “The Justice Center will continue to investigate and prosecute abuse cases to ensure that the public is aware that this conduct is criminal, unacceptable, and will not be tolerated.”

The plea, recommended by the Court, was entered in full satisfaction of the charges. The disposition spares the victim from the additional trauma of testifying at a trial. At his sentencing on May 24th, the defendant will also be mandated to register as a sex offender and surrender his teaching license. The defendant also waived any right to challenge a determination of the Justice Center that would prohibit him from the future care of vulnerable persons in the State of New York.

The arrest was the result of a joint investigation conducted by the Town of Amherst Police Department and the Justice Center.

The Justice Center and its statewide hotline and incident reporting system began operations on June 30, 2013. It is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week by trained professionals who receive reports of allegations of abuse and neglect of people with special needs. Once a report is received by its Vulnerable Persons Central Register (VPCR) Hotline, it is logged and assessed. Serious cases of abuse or neglect are assigned to the Justice Center's investigation team or, when appropriate, to a local law enforcement agency for follow-up.

The Justice Center also maintains a statewide registry of all persons who have been found to be responsible for serious or repeated acts of abuse and neglect. Once placed on the registry, known as the "Staff Exclusion List" or SEL, they are prohibited by law from ever working again with people with disabilities or special needs.

Through the services provided by the Justice Center's Individual and Family Support Unit – victims, their families, personal representatives and guardians receive guidance and information about the reporting and investigation process and support during criminal cases and court proceedings.

People Inc. is certified by the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). OPWDD is one of six state agencies under the jurisdiction of the Justice Center. The Justice Center also oversees certain facilities or programs that are operated, licensed or certified by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the State Education Department (SED).

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